

Oregon Department of Human Services. Health Consultation: Willamette Cove (a/k/a Portland Harbor) Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. 16 Sept. 2003. (Reviewed by Jessica Miller)

The Oregon Department of Human Services, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and other NGOs worked to prepare the September 2003 Health Consultation of the Willamette Cove. The focus of the report is the investigation of the physical health hazards at the site, and the recommendations for remedy of such hazards.

After providing a quick background of the physical and chemical dangers as well as common uses of the water at the specific site, the report gives examples of the current hazards. “The entire Cove would be extremely dangerous for any water-based activity” as there are numerous structures that provide severe dangers as they are unstable, sharply protruding, and at some points in the water, not easily visible. There are numerous heavy falling hazards as well as entrapment hazards.

The surrounding community was surveyed and the report claims that their concerns deal mostly with safe swimming areas. The consultation concludes with recommendations (some for future and some currently in the works) to maintain a safe environment by limiting access while working towards improving the area for extended recreation use in the future.

Critique

This consultation provides the reader with very clear dangers that exist at the Willamette Cove. While many reports discussing human health have been very scientific and involved chemical dangers, this report lays out the basic facts about physical dangers.

Most of the dangers described in the report are due to littering of large sheets of metal, abandoned camping materials, drug and alcohol paraphernalia, large quantities of industrial debris, and a deteriorating barge. It does not take a scientist to realize that such items provide reason to be concerned.

The report concludes that the Willamette Cove is a public health hazard and the area should be restricted until remedy can occur. Especially helpful is the section of the report that provides the recommendations and then summarizes which recommendations have been completed and which are ongoing or planned for the future. Finally, the report offers the information of those who repaired it so that interested community members may contact the correct experts for follow-up information.

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